



Serving Shaw Air Force Base, S.C.

Nov. 21, 2003

Vol. 9, No. 45

Newslines

Closures

The 20th Fighter Wing legal office will close today at noon for an official function. For immediate legal assistance, call **983-1415**.

The 20th Medical Group will offer limited services after 2 p.m. today due to training and will close Thursday. The BX pharmacy, clinic pharmacy, laboratory and radiology departments will also close during training and Thursday and Friday. During training, and Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., the Primary Care Clinic can be reached at **895-2273** for acute medical concerns only.

Commander's Call

The next 20th Fighter Wing Commander's Calls are set for Tuesday at the Base Theater. Attendance is mandatory.

8 a.m. -- E-6 and below

9:30 a.m. -- E-6 and below

11 a.m. -- E-6 and below

4:30 p.m. -- E-6 and below

6 p.m. -- Officers and Senior NCOs

Holiday hours

The housing Shoppette will be open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday. The main Shoppette/Class Six will close Thursday. However, fuel pumps will be open for unattended pay-at-the-pump service only.

All other AAFES facilities will close Thursday.

The Commissary will be open Monday, closed Thursday and open Nov. 28.

The Base Exchange will open at 6 a.m. for holiday shopping Nov. 28-29.

Dining facility hours for Thursday are:

Breakfast -- 7:30 - 9:30 a.m.

Thanksgiving meal -- 10:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Dinner -- 4 - 6 p.m.

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Photo by Airman 1st Class Susan Penning

Dirty work

Airman 1st Class Tim Spielman, 20th Civil Engineer Squadron, shovels dirt Monday to make way for a new sidewalk near the 20th Fighter Wing Headquarters building. Other base sidewalk projects are currently under construction as well.

Tax relief aids military, families

By K.L. Vantran

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON -- Tax time is around the corner and, thanks to recent changes, Shaw members may be pleasantly surprised at the return they get this year.

"Exemption amounts have gone up for military families, which means they could expect to get more money back," said Lee Joyce, Shaw Tax Center administrator.

"Members may benefit in a variety of areas, including death gratuity payment," said Capt. Joseph Esparza, assistant staff judge advocate at Shaw.

New legislation signed by President George W. Bush Nov. 11 increases the death gratuity payment to \$12,000 and provides that the full payment is tax-free.

That portion of the Military Family Tax Relief Act of 2003 is retroactive to Sept. 10, 2001, to pro-

vide for service members who died in the terrorist attacks the following day and in the ongoing global war on terror, said Army Lt. Col. Janet Fenton, Armed Forces Tax Council director.

"If you are killed on active duty, regardless of whether you're in theater, a training accident or die from disease, your family receives \$12,000 death gratuity that is not taxed," she said. "That's a big change. In addition, any future increases to the death gratuity will remain tax-free."

The death gratuity has been \$6,000 since 1991, with half of it being taxed, she said.

Capital-gain exclusion for home sales is one of the most common areas people are looking for tax relief in, Fenton said.

"This act will allow members to suspend the period of time which they have to sell their home and take the tax exclusion so they won't have to pay capital gains," she said. "It's retroactive to 1997 so

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Weekend weather

Friday



Clear
High: 72
Low: 45

Saturday



Clear
High: 79
Low: 47

Sunday



Clear
High: 77
Low: 47

Courtesy of the 20th Operations Support Squadron Weather Flight

Inside: Page 12: National Native American Heritage Month: contributions and traditions.
Page 13: Sending Christmas goodies: packing tips and postal deadlines.

Newslines II

Holiday party

The 9th Air Force holiday party is set for Dec. 1 at 6 p.m. in the Shaw Conference Center. Tickets are \$5 for E-5 and below, \$10 for all others and are available through unit representatives or at the door.

Cookie Drive

The Airmen's Cookie Drive is scheduled for Dec. 5 at the Community Center. Cookies can be dropped off from 7-10 a.m. that day. For more information or to volunteer for setup, making cookie trays or cleanup, call 499-3553.

Base Library hours

The Base Library will remain closed for renovation until Dec 7. A grand-reopening, with refreshments, is set for Dec. 8 at 10 a.m.

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military members who have sold their homes since 1997 have one year from Nov. 11, 2003, to request a refund for any tax they did pay."

Also since 1997, individuals could exclude up to \$250,000 (\$500,000 for married couples) of gain from the sale of a home if they resided in it for two of the five years preceding the sale. Under this act, military and foreign service people can suspend (for up to 10 years) the time transferred away from home on official extended duty for purposes of applying the five-year portion of the two-out-of-five-year rule.

The 2003 act also includes above-the-line deduction for overnight-travel expenses of military reservists and National Guardsmen who have to travel more than 100 miles to attend drills or meetings.

"The act allows for an above-the-

line, which means you don't have to itemize your taxes to take advantage of this deduction," Fenton said. "Service members will be able to deduct unreimbursed travel expenses such as lodging, 50% of meals and any transportation costs." This part of the act is retroactive to Jan. 1.

When the tax code changed in 1986, it allowed any military benefit existing in September 1986 to remain tax-free, Fenton said. However, it was always unclear whether military child care was included in that, she added.

"This act makes it clear that those provisions of child care were intended to be tax-free to military members," she said.

The tax act also provides extra tax-filing time for members serving in contingency operations -- usually 180 days from the time the person leaves the combat zone -- to file taxes.

The act also includes modifying

eligibility criteria of tax-exempt veterans organizations; tax-free treatment of homeowners' assistance program payments; suspension of tax-exempt status for designated terrorist organizations; and extension of victims' tax relief to astronauts who die on space missions.

Shaw members can begin 2004 tax preparation now by gathering W-2s, Wage and Tax Statements, forms 1099 and/or 1098, a copy of the past year's tax return, and legal documents such as divorce decrees, separation agreements, powers of attorney, military identification and the social security card of the person filing.

Shaw's Tax Center provides free tax preparation to servicemembers and is set to open in early January. Call the Legal Office at 895-1560 for more information. (Airman 1st Class Susan Penning contributed to this article.)

20th Security Forces Squadron Blotter

(Editor's note: The blotter includes incidents from the 20th Security Forces Squadron reports. The following information is intended to increase awareness of resource protection and safety concerns.)

■ An airman and his spouse were involved in a domestic dispute at their base housing residence.

■ Security Forces responded to seven incidents regarding accidents and damages to vehicles.

■ An airman reported a juvenile broke a window of the 5000-area Shoppette bus stop while throwing rocks.

■ Two airmen were apprehended off base for Public

Drunkenness.

■ An airman was apprehended off base for Driving Under the Influence.

■ An airman was apprehended at the Base Exchange for Shoplifting.

■ An airman was apprehended off base for Aggravated Domestic Violence.

■ There were 25 traffic tickets issued during the week.

In case of emergency, call 911. Direct routine questions and non-emergency concerns to the 20th SFS at 895-3670. If you have information about any crime, listed here or otherwise, call the 20th Security Forces Investigations section at 895-3600.



Traffic Tips

Many drivers may not be aware that using vehicle cruise control during inclement weather can be dangerous. The constant speed a vehicle maintains while on cruise control can increase the chances of hydroplaning and losing control of the vehicle. Drivers should only use cruise control when roadways are dry and clean and never during rainy or icy conditions. Also, cruise control should never be used in the city or other congested-traffic areas, as the decreased vehicle control could contribute to an accident.

OPSEC reminder

Terrorists look for "indicators." Activities showing a daily routine establish a profile and are indicators that can be exploited by enemies.

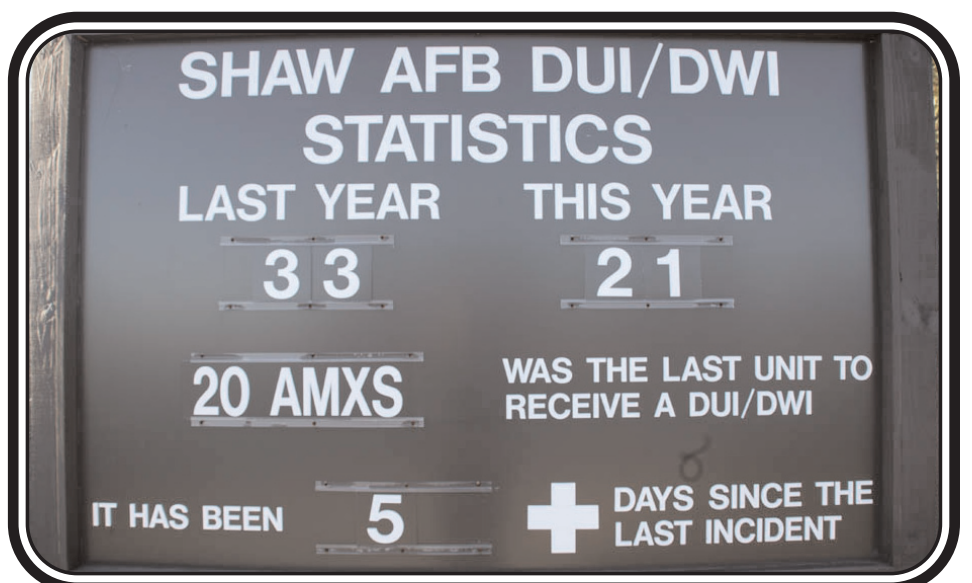
Trivia contest

Question: How many ribbons can you wear in a row on your service dress uniform?

Last week's question: Class A ground mishaps result in a fatality, permanent total disability, destruction of or damage beyond economical repair to an Air Force aircraft or a cost of \$1 million or more.

Last week's winner: Airman 1st Class Kevin Strattan, 28th Operational Weather Squadron

The first person to e-mail *The Shaw Spirit* at spirit.editor@shaw.af.mil with the correct answer will get their name in next week's paper.



AADD 983-9722 (As of Thursday)

Graham retirement

Tech. Sgt. Diana Graham, 20th Operations Support Squadron, is retiring after 20 years of service. She has been at Shaw 13 years.

After retirement, the Copperas Cove, Texas, native will remain in the local area until she starts a second career.

The retirement ceremony is today at 11 a.m. in the Saunders Room of the Shaw Conference Center.



Photo by Airman 1st Class Teneha Clements

Superior Performers

Maj. Christopher Finta (left), Staff Sgt. John Delaney (center), and Senior Airman Qiana Morris were named superior performers during the 28th Operational Weather Squadron's recent Stan/Eval inspection. They were recognized for outstanding job performance and dedication to duty by the inspection team from the Headquarters Air Force Weather Agency. The squadron received a score of 98%.

Stork Sorties

Oct. 6 - Joseph Pierce to Will and Colleen Vaughn

If you would like your child's birth announced in the Stork Sorties section of *The Shaw Spirit*, send the date of birth, baby's full name and the first and last name of the parent(s) to spirit.editor@shaw.af.mil.

Announcements are run once a month and should be received by the first Friday of each month.



Vets' Christmas Charity Ride

The Vets' Christmas Charity Ride is scheduled for Dec. 14 at 2 p.m. The entry fee is one gift to be given to a veteran. Participants will gather at 1 p.m. and ride from Carolina Honda at 3620 River Dr. to Dorn V.A. Medical Center in Columbia. But you don't have to ride to participate. Gifts can taken to Carolina Honda, any Fort Jackson Credit Union location or the Career Assistance Advisor's office in the 20th Support Center by Dec. 12. For more information, call (803) 252-3381, Senior Master Sgt. Raymond Butler at 895-7830 or log on to www.gwrrasc.com.





First C-5 arrives at Balad

BALAD SOUTHEAST AIRFIELD, Iraq -- The first C-5 Galaxy arrived here Nov. 12, from Dover Air Force Base, Del., increasing the Air Force presence at the Army's Logistical Support Area. A 14-person crew and about 21 truckloads of war materiel were on board the aircraft.

Fewer Army trucks on the road translates to potentially more American lives saved.

No other aircraft in the Air Force inventory has the 270,000-pound cargo-carrying capacity of the C-5; it can carry twice as much as the next largest jet in the Air Force inventory.

As primarily a strategic airlifter, it is not normally used in a tactical environment; however, when used in-theater, it can quickly relieve cargo backlogs and provide critically needed airlift for missions like unit redeployments or troop rotations. *(Brief courtesy of Air Force Print News.)*

Intern program opens

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio -- Air Force Research Laboratory Propulsion

Directorate officials kicked off the 3rd Annual Wright Scholar Research Assistant Program for summer 2004.

The paid internships run for a 10- to 12-week period for up to 40 hours per week. Application deadline is Jan. 16.

Eligible student applicants must meet the following requirements:

- Be 16 years old at the time of appointment.
- Be a U.S. citizen.
- Be a high-school junior or senior.
- Seniors must provide a college acceptance letter before working.
- Be in the top 20% of their class or have a 3.25 overall grade point average.

Home-schooled students may be considered if they score in the top 20% overall on a national standardized test.

For more information, visit www.pr.af.mil/jobs/scholar.htm, call Shelly Rich at (937) 255-1870, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or e-mail her at shellyrich@wpafb.af.mil. *(Brief courtesy of AFPN.)*

Letters processed quicker

WASHINGTON -- Airmen and civilian employees can get presidential retirement letters processed more quickly through an information manager in the legislative liaison office at the Pentagon.

People serving more than 30 years on active duty or as a civilian employee can request a Presidential

Letter of Appreciation for retirement.

Prospective retirees can register through either the military or civilian personnel flights. Applicants must provide full name, rank, title, years of service, home address, retirement address, retirement date and ceremony date. Information must be approved by a military or civilian personnel office and submitted via a military network.

For more information, call Shaw's Military Personnel Flight customer service at **895-1596** or Civilian Personnel Flight at **895-1801**. *(Brief courtesy of AFPN.)*

AF sponsors Busch race car

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas -- The next generation of the Wood Brothers racing team dynasty is "Crossing into the Blue" driving a specially painted Ford Taurus prominently featuring the Air Force logo and colors.

Coming on the heels of his recent NASCAR Craftsman Truck Series win at Martinsville, Va., Jon Wood made his 2003 debut in the NASCAR Busch Series at the Ford 300 Nov. 15 in Homestead, Fla.

To NASCAR fans, the Air Force partnership is not unusual. The Air Force is an associate advertiser in the NASCAR Winston Cup Series with the Wood Brothers' No. 21 Motorcraft Racing Ford Taurus, driven by Ricky Rudd. *(Brief courtesy of Air Education and Training Command News Service.)*

'One click, one call' customer service arrives

New phone number and Web site offer single source for pay, personnel issues

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas -- A one-stop customer service phone number and Web page are up and running, linking several call centers and online resources Air Force people use when managing personnel and pay information.

A single phone number and a companion Web site now make it easier for Air Force active-duty and reserve component military, as well as U.S. appropriated fund civilian employees, to find what they need quickly, Air Force Personnel Center officials said.

Customers can find answers to questions by calling toll free **(800) 616-3775** or visiting **www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/cst**. Until now the burden has been on Air Force people to determine which agency handles a particular issue before contacting customer service by phone or on the Web. Customers will be able to access any of the following support services by

using the new number and Web site:

■ Air Force Contact Center for general military personnel inquiries, including discrimination and sexual harassment concerns and assistance in navigating the virtual military personnel flight application.

■ Air Reserve Personnel Center in Denver for Air Force Reserve and Air National Guard personnel inquiries.

■ Defense Finance and Accounting Service's Cleveland Contact Center for military pay inquiries and assistance with the myPay application.

■ AFPC Technical Assistance Center for technical support for applications such as vMPF, assignment management system, AFPC Secure and PC-III.

■ AFPC Recruiting Service Center for civilian appropriated-fund job opportunities.

■ AFPC Benefits and Entitlements Service Team for civilian appropriat-

ed-fund benefits and entitlements.

This latest evolution in customer self-service is the product of revolutionary cooperation between different agencies inside and outside of the Air Force, officials said.

"A substantial partnership between military and civilian personnel, Air Force financial services (military pay), and Defense Finance and Accounting Service -- years in the making -- is making one-stop customer service possible," said James Short, the Air Force's deputy assistant secretary for financial operations.

"It goes beyond just a phone number and a Web page," said Roger Blanchard, assistant deputy chief of staff for personnel. "What our customer service transformation team is beginning to do is actually combine customer service efforts behind the scenes to serve customers faster and more efficiently."

Several of the linked call centers reside at the personnel center, where leaders have been facilitating the consolidation of Air Force customer-service operations.

"We are making sure customer service is a lot more than a 1-800 number," said Maj. Gen. Tom O'Riordan, personnel center commander. "Our focus is making sure we meet the needs of the field, and that we accelerate those changes which make life simpler for the commander and our airmen."

Customers calling from international locations and hearing-impaired employees should continue to dial the number they currently use to access support for personnel or pay matters, officials said. The new toll-free number should begin accommodating foreign area calls early next year, officials said. *(Courtesy of AFPC News Service.)*